

Preparing to Fill Out a Job Application

Why do I Need to Prepare for a Job Application?

Here's an embarrassing scenario that might happen to you, if you're not prepared to fill out a job application on the spot.

You survive everything they throw at you and breeze through the first round of interviews without breaking stride. Piece of cake. The last interviewer asks you to fill out a job application. You take it as a sign that the company is interested in you, so you eagerly comply. You know you've got this job in your pocket, if all else goes well.

But as you start filling out the job application, you realize that the extra resumes you thoughtfully brought with you don't include your former employers' addresses and phone numbers, as resumes typically don't. Until now, you haven't had to recall the street number of the residence where you lived six years ago, so you draw a blank. You can remember your references' names, but not their business phone numbers. You start to get nervous and can't even remember the grade point average you were so proud of ten years ago. So, you have to sheepishly ask if you can take the job application home, like some school kid who didn't do his homework.

Employers are usually in a hurry to fill vacant positions, because the longer it takes, the more it costs them. If they're interested in hiring you, they want to get the ball rolling right away with plenty of leeway for completing paperwork, including time-consuming background and reference checks.

Your resume is only your calling card. Employers often want you to fill out a job application on the day of your first round of interviews, because that's what they really need to start the ball rolling. So one of the worst things you can do is to turn in an incomplete job application or delay the process by asking to take it home. It's not a good idea to let competing candidates beat you to it, either.

So that you may gather information, paperwork, etc. in advance, below is a list of the details employers typically want you to provide on job applications. It excludes the ordinary for which you don't need to prepare, such as your contact information.

- Social security number (SSN)
- Driver's license number and state of issue
- Whether or not you've been convicted of a crime by civil or military courts
 - Nature of the offense
 - Date of conviction
 - Location where convicted
 - Disposition (sentence, probation, etc.)
- Home addresses for the past ten years
- Date you're available for work
 - If you must give your current employer notice two weeks in advance, write Two weeks notice.
 - Otherwise, write the date on which you know for sure you can start work.
- Military service. Bring your discharge papers, just in case they ask to see them.
 - Entry and discharge dates
 - Type of discharge
 - Branch
 - Occupational specialization
 - Special training received and dates
 - Last rank

- You might be asked if you're a veteran of a war, such as Vietnam. This is for affirmative action programs, not discrimination.
- Position desired, first and second choices
- Geographic preference, first and second choices
- Salary desired. If you want to temporarily sidestep the salary issue so you can negotiate, write *negotiable*, *open* or *competitive*.
- How you heard about the job
 - If an employee referred you, get the employee's work contact information in advance.
 - Then include it on the job application if required, so the employee receives incentives due.
- Education and training
 - Start and end dates
 - School names and addresses
 - Majors and minors
 - Degrees earned and dates
 - Grade point average
 - Rank in class
 - Titles of Master's and Ph.D. Theses, and advisors' names
- Additional skills. Typically, you don't need to worry too much about these unless applicable for the job. For example, lots of workers type on computers these days, but words per minute (WPM) usually applies only to clerical jobs.
 - Typing WPM
 - Steno WPM
 - Professional licenses
 - Language fluency
 - Software knowledge
 - Equipment knowledge
 - Technical skills
- Professional organization memberships
 - Names of organizations
 - Dates of membership
 - Addresses and phone numbers
- Whether or not you are authorized to work in the country. If you have a work visa or weren't a citizen at birth, be sure to bring relevant paperwork.
 - Up to four references
 - Business and home addresses
 - Day and evening phone numbers
 - Occupations
 - Relationships with you
- Whether or not you've previously applied for work or worked at the same company. If so,
 - Dates of application or employment
 - Divisions, units and departments for which you worked
 - Names of bosses
- Work history
 - Names of employers including current employer
 - Mailing and street addresses (if different), and phone numbers. Provide this information for the offices where the Human Resources (HR) departments or your work records are located.
 - Start and end dates. Write *present* for the ending date at your current employer.
 - Reasons for leaving. Be careful with this one. Never criticize a former employer. Instead, write something generic like *career advancement*.
 - Last or beginning and ending salaries. If you want to temporarily sidestep salary or don't think it's any of their business, leave it blank or write *competitive*.
 - Boss's names, titles and business contact information
 - Your titles and the type of work you did

- Reasons for gaps of 90 days or more in your work history, other than school

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The following sample job application will give you an idea of what to expect when you apply for a job. You may be asked to fill out an application on the day of the interview, so make sure you are prepared to provide any necessary information about yourself and your employment history.

[Sample Job Application](#)
